MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

# the doors

The Doors are somewhat of an anomaly in the rock pantheon. They weren't part of the peace and love Airplane-Dead-Quicksilver acid-rock movement of San Francisco. They had nothing to do with the English invasion, or even conventional pop music for that matter. Even in their home town of Los Angeles they were considered a world apart from the predominantly folk-rock peerage of the Byrds, Buffalo Springfield and Mamas and Papas.

The Doors were never part of any movement. Indeed, during an era of very high fliers, their visionary trajectory sought an orbit positioned well outside of the rock norm. Their journey was driven by a unique group vision and a determination to push the envelope of poetry, spirituality, intellect and psycho-sexual exploration in popular music as far as possible.

From their beginnings during the summer of 1965 at Venice Beach, California, The Doors were truly a band — a remarkable fusion of creative energies. A lot of attention has been focused on Jim Morrison, and his talents clearly justify that. However, Jim was well aware that the magic of The Doors could never have happened without the fortunate forging of John Densmore (born December 1, 1944), Robby Krieger (born January 8, 1946), Ray Manzarek (born February 12, 1939) and Jim Morrison (born December 8, 1943) into a single creative whole. It is no mystery why Jim Morrison never went solo; so sympathetic were the three other musicians to Jim's mission that such a consideration was out of the question. Robby Krieger, for example, was able to write lyrics and music that sounded more like Morrison than Morrison himself — among them "Light My Fire," "Love Me Two Times," and "Love Her Madly."

Without Krieger, Manzarek and Densmore there is a strong chance that Jim's songs would never have made it off the page, into rehearsal, onto the stage, into the recording studio and, in defiance of all odds, to successive generations who have since discovered The Doors as a "new" group.

Ray Manzarek, a classically trained pianist, raised in Chicago with a deep love for the blues, wrote the chord structures and themes for many of the songs and played not only the keyboard parts but simultaneously (with his left hand) propelled the band with melodic driving bass lines. John Densmore, a jazz drummer with an unbeatable knack for shamanic rhythm and theatrical timing . . . the band's tireless engine. Robby Krieger, a songwriting secret weapon who could play any guitar, from classic flamenco to bottleneck blues, to creating styles and sounds previously unheard on this planet. And Jim Morrison, the baritone, eclectic/electric poet with an innate compositional gift and the soul of a mystic. Together these men brought The Doors' songs to life — they were equal points of a musical diamond.

One night, just before the group was to go on stage, a disc jockey announced to the audience, "Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Jim Morrison and The Doors." As the DJ approached the group backstage, Jim pulled him aside and said, "Uh-uh man, go back and introduce us right." The DJ panicked. "What did I say? What did I do?" "It's *The Doors*," Jim said, "The name of the band is *The Doors*."

The band took its name from the poet-visionary-artist William Blake, who had written, "When the Doors of perception are cleansed, things will appear to man as they truly are . . . infinite." English author Aldous Huxley was sufficiently inspired by Blake's quote to title his book on mescaline experiences *The Doors Of Perception*. Morrison was so connected to both works that he proposed, The Doors, to his bandmates. Everyone agreed that the name, as well as the inspiration from which it sprang, was perfect to convey who they were and clearly represent what they stood for.

The group was signed to Elektra Records, then a small folk-music record company, in July of 1966 by Jac Holzman, Elektra's founder. By April 1971, The Doors had recorded six landmark studio LPs and a two-record set of live performances, the first seven discs with producer Paul A. Rothchild and the last one coproduced by The Doors and their career-long engineer Bruce Botnick . . . both The Doors and Elektra had grown into world famed institutions.

The band's unstated goal was to accomplish musical alchemy — to fuse rock music with both existential poetry and improvisational theater. Jim was greatly influenced by

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the nineteenth century poet Arthur Rimbaud and he dutifully imparted Rimbaud's philosophy to the group. Rimbaud advocated a systematic "rational derangement of all the senses in order to achieve the unknown."

Jim's fascination with the unknown is well documented. He was fond of William Blake and liked to quote him, "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," a bit of advice he took all too tragically to heart. Jim would say, "There are things known, and there are things unknown, and in between are the Doors"— a quote often attributed to Blake, but actually written by Morrison. Morrison was a man who would not, could not, and did not know how to compromise himself or his art. This was the source of his innocence and purity — as well as his blessing and curse. He was driven to go all the way or die trying, the ultimate ecstatic risk taker. Manzarek, Krieger and Densmore's contribution to this state of creative ecstasy cannot be underestimated. In order for the musical spell to be successfully cast they gave willingly and generously while also allowing incredible tension to develop by creating space as well as showing magnificent restraint — the ultimate musical offering. The power of improvisation that drove Morrison onstage required the other three Doors to not merely play arrangements but to follow Jim's unplanned creative arcs perfectly in one of the music's classic and most difficult feats — the art of intuitive accompaniment.

Jim once explained, "A Doors concert is a public meeting called by us for a special dramatic discussion. When we perform, we're participating in the creation of a world and we celebrate that with the crowd." He would scream, "Wake Up!" 1000 times on 1000 nights in an effort to shake the audience out of its self-imposed lethargy and TV-bred unconsciousness. A few days before he flew to Paris, to his death, Jim gave his last statement to the press, "For me, it was never really an act, those so-called performances. It was a life-and-death thing, an attempt to communicate, to involve many people in a private world of thought."

During the late 1960's bands sang of love and peace while acid was passed out. But for The Doors it was different. The nights belonged to Pan and Dionysus, the gods of revelry and rebirth, and the songs invoked their potent passions — the Oedipal nightmare of "The End," the breathless gallop

a l b u m s

*The Doors*, Elektra Records, January 1967; *Strange Days*, Elektra Records, October 1967; *Waiting for the Sun*, Elektra Records, July 1968; *The Soft Parade*, Elektra Records, July 1969; *Morrison Hotel*, Elektra Records, February 1970 ; *Absolutely Live*, Elektra Records, July 1970; *L.A. Woman*, Elektra Records, April 1971; *An American Prayer*, Elektra Records, November 1978; *Alive She Cried*, Elektra Records, October 1983; *The Doors Live at the Hollywood Bowl*,; Elektra Records, June 1987; *In Concert*, Elektra Records, May 1991; *Original Soundtrack to 'The Doors'*; Elektra Records, March 1991

MICHAEL MONTFORT/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES (2) of release in "Not to Touch the Earth," the torment of "Horse Latitudes," the weird paranoia of "Strange Days," the doom of "Hyacinth House," the ecstasy of "Light My Fire," a personal view of mortality in "When the Music's Over." And as with Dionysus, The Doors willingly offered themselves as a sacrifice to be torn apart, to bleed, to die, to be reborn for yet another night in another town.

To be a poet meant more to Morrison than writing poems. It meant embracing the tragedy fate has chosen for you and fulfilling that destiny with gusto and nobility. He sought immortality as a poet only to see those efforts sabotaged by his enormous appeal as a rock star. Still Jim got what he wanted . . . to be like a shooting star; now you see him, now you don't.

In the end, after conquering America, after being shackled by the courts and laws of the land that he loved, he escaped to Paris, traditional home of so many expatriate artists, to pursue his life as a poet. But his body was too worn down, his heart too weak; he had already seen and done and drunk too much. He had lived life on his own terms, had reaped the rewards, and now the bill was due. His spirit was tired. Death was simply closer and easier than returning to America, to the endless succession of stages it demanded. Jim Morrison passed away in Paris on July 3, 1971. His dying wish was to be remembered as a poet.

Pamela Morrison used to tell a story from the very earliest days of The Doors. They were playing their first club, The London Fog. It was their last set of the night and there were only three people in the club, two drunks and Pamela. The band was incandescent. Jim raged and exploded with super-human passion — a transcendent performance. Pam was stunned. In the car she could say nothing . . . long after arriving home she was still speechless. Jim asked, "What's wrong baby?" Pam said, "There were three people in the club during the last set. But you burned like you were performing for thousands of people. Why did you go so far, risk so much for a tiny audience that was barely aware of your presence?" Jim looked at her and said slowly, "You never know when you're doing your last set."

Considering the force of energy generated by The Doors over 25 years ago, that "last set" could well be several generations away. - PAUL A. ROTHCHILD & DANNY SUGERMAN

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s i n g l e s

*Break On Through*, Elektra Records, January 1967; *Light My Fire*, Elektra Records, April 1967; *People Are Strange*, Elektra Records; September, 1967; *Love Me Two Times*, Elektra Records, November 1967; *The Unknown Soldier*, Elektra Records, March 1968; *Hello I Love You*, Elektra Records, June 1968; *Touch Me*, Elektra Records, December 1968; *Wishful Sinful*, Elektra Records, February 1969; *Tell All The People*, Elektra Records, May 1969; *Runnin' Blue*, Elektra Records, August 1969; *You Make Me Real*, Elektra Records, March 1970; *Love Her Madly*, Elektra Records, March 1971; *Riders On the Storm*, Elektra Records, June 1971; *Roadhouse Blues*, Elektra Records, January 1979; *Gloria*, Elektra Records, December, 1983

TOP: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

# california sound

It's the pot of gold at the end of Route 66; home to the cutest girls in the world; the place you'd rather be when all the leaves are brown and the ski is gray; where it never rains and a certain hotel always has room for the pretty, pretty people. It's where you come when you're going right back where you started from.

It, of course, is California, that mythic state of mind, where life is sweet along palmy streets paved with broken dreams. It's where the world runs out, merging with surf and sun and sky into a fanciful paradise of winsome charm and wishful thinking. From the desert to the sea to orange groves rolled flat by freeways, it's California now and forever. . . amen.

Notwithstanding Paris when it sizzles or autumn in New York, California is maybe the most celebrated locale in the history of popular music. Banjo-pluckers sang her praises on their way to gold fields and heartbreak. Oakies ached for her citrus-scented bounty, and every surfer worth his salt can sing a salute to her gnarly tubes.

For big band warbler Irving Kaufman, "California and You" was all he needed to put together his first hit in the freezing Gotham winter of 1914. Ten years later "California Here I Come," first heard in a Broadway musical called *Bombo*, reaped gold for, respectively, Al Jolson, George Price and California Ramblers. In 1931, Red Nichols & His Five Pennies cashed in with "California Medley."

But it's more recently that California — the dream, the reality and the shimmering mirage between the two — has come into musical maturity. Since the dawn of rock & roll, dozens of tunes touting California's elusive essence have made the charts. Among the many: Leslie Gore's "California Nights," the Rivieras' "California Sun," "California Dreamin'" by the Mama's & the Papa's and "California Soul" by the 5th Dimension.

The list goes on (who can forget "California," Debbie Boone's plaintive 1978 follow-up to "You Light Up My Life?"), but California's place in rock reaches far beyond a litany of Golden State come-ons. It's a place that has nurtured more significant innovations in music than anywhere in the world. More than simply a destination for dreams, California is home for a dazzling variety of indigenous sounds, echoed and enhanced by the legendary locale itself.

Where else, for example, could Brian Wilson have found inspiration for what remains the single most potent evocation of all things Californian? For the rest of the world, the Beach Boys *are* California, in all its eternal youth and halcyon hedonism. There is simply no body of work as closely associated with its point of origin as the sound and substance of these 1988 Hall of Fame inductees. The Beach Boys' sonic simulation of surfing may have initially ridden the crest of a craze, but early Sixties hits like "Surfin," "Surfin' Safari," "Surfin' USA" and "Surfer Girl" (complete with a West Coast geography lesson from "Huntington to Malibu") have endured as anthems to that most alluring element of the California lifestyle — the promise of a free ride.

The same might be said for their drag strip dramas and high school confidentials. But such is the group's identity as a Southern California zeitgeist that is virtually impossible to imagine "Rhonda" or "Barbara Ann" residing anywhere else. If not always "Good Vibrations," then certainly "Fun, Fun, Fun," could well be California's official motto. It's a connection that sparked again in the hit flick *Shampoo* when "Wouldn't It Be Nice" became the ironic lament of Beverly Hills' bored and beautiful.

The Beach Boys, Jan & Dean and a dozen supersonic surf bands fashioned a universally recognized California Sound out of high harmonies and Strats. But the state has hosted such a wide variety of musical evolutions and revolutions that the lines quickly begin to blur: what began there was soon everywhere. For much of the best music of the rock & roll era, it really *did* happen in California first.

The prime example, of course, is the sublime and surreal epidemic of innovation known as the San Francisco Sound. While lumping together such as absurd profusion of music under a single rubric may be an audacious conceit, this much

TOP: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES

*from top left: buffalo springfield; quicksilver messenger service; the byrds* *is* known: the outbreak was largely confined to the San Francisco Bay Area in the mid-Sixties, it was no respecter of race, creed or color, and no one has ever been the same since.

What's striking, at this distance from California's psychedelic epicenter, is the music's commercial impact. Of San Francisco's pantheon of pioneering early bands — the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Big Brother & the Holding Company — most went on to achieve genuine mainstream success. It was, of course, another example of California trend-setting, but more to the point, the San Francisco Sound was another heady whiff of the creative audacity that had always hung over the western edge.

***the beach boys***

The transcendental folk tales of California's native's the Grateful Dead, heard on such essential albums as 1970's *Workingman's Dead* and *American Beauty*, evoked imagery of an Acadian California. The "Dire Wolf" prowled the pine forests of the High Sierras; "A Friend of the Devil" was on the lam in the high desert.

But it was the ringing, echo-drenched early hits of Jefferson Airplane that best represented California to the rest of the awakening world. 1967's "Somebody to Love" remains a cornerstone of psychedelia's contribution to pop mainstream. The acoustic strumming, the silver dagger sentiments, Grace Slick's slashing vocals backed by Marty Balin's polished harmony — the song neatly summed up the intense fusion of folk and rock that had been underway in California for years.

As for the rest of the motley Sixties crew rocking Babylon By the Bay, the mind boggles. After all, wasn't that the point? The San Francisco Sound was *about* being different, from everyone else, ever. Tom Donahue's eclectic Autumn Records roster neatly captured the time and place, thanks largely to Autumn's A&R chief, and this year's Hall of Fame inductee, Sly Stone. The label waxed a dazzling array of native talent, from faux-Edwardians the Beau Brummels to the Mojo Men, whose lilting "Sit Down I Think I Love You" is a sparkling example of the sheen the California sound lent to the most disposable pop ditties.

According to the wag, there is no "there" in Oakland, yet San Francisco's East Bay has forged a modest yet significant musical presence with some key California artists. The boogie of El Cerrito's own Creedence Clear-water Revival rightly belongs to fans from Lodi to the bayou, thanks to nine consecutive Top 10 singles. But sounds more representative of San Francisco's down-home sister can be found in the East Bay Grease of Tower of Power and the dazzling diversity of Sly & The Family Stone. The clan's canny funk-rock concoctions, most conspicuously 1968's "Dance to the Music" and "Everyday People," pointed to the mix-and-match cultural mélange for which California was becoming renowned. Different strokes for different folks, indeed ... and Sly knows most all of them.

Down South, Los Angeles had long since established itself as a pop music mecca, a hit-making factory the equal of any. From Johnny Otis to Terry Melcher, Lou Adler to Peter Asher, Jerry Leiber to Mike Stoller, the best behind-the-boards talent in the business did their best work in the city's studio hive.

L. A.–based Specialty Records boasted a distinctive West

NEAL PETERS COLLECTION (2)

Coast R&B sound with artists the likes of Little Richard, Larry Williams, Lloyd Price and others. Producer and talent scout extraordinaire Johnny Otis was the spark plug for dozens of homegrown hits. Among Otis' most enduring discoveries: California native and Hall of Fame inductee Etta James, who recorded for the Bihari brothers' Mo-dern Records, another L.A. enterprise.

While flowers in the hair were *de rigueur* for San Francisco, something more ominous was sprouting to the south, where the Beach Boys' balmy reveries had given way to smog-and-neon passion plays, with soundtrack courtesy of the Doors. On the 1967's break-on-through debut album the group posited a wholly different California landscape — one, in its vividness, as complete and compelling as surf music or psychedelic soul. Their rapacious visions of an urban wasteland shot through with lurid transcendence, served as a road map to California's soft and seamy underbelly. There were some spooky characters out there in the charred hills beyond Tinsel Town, and The Door's moody grandeur lit more than one weird goldmine scene. This, too, was California ... a place where madness lurked in the shadows of a Hollywood bungalow.

*the grateful dead, 1969*

It was an echo heard in the melancholy ballads of Love, Arthur Lee's quintessential Lotus Land dandies, whose languid laments expressed the detached cool of an L.A. in love with its own wan reflection. The Byrds, on the other hand, defined their California-ness in Right Stuff rock & roll, all Jet Age symmetry and supercharged twelve strings, like something out of Travis AFB, flying eight miles high over Hollywood.The California Sound would continue its prismatic refractions of time and place, chasing down a dozen variants on the theme of charmed living — from the soul of Boz Scaggs to the simmering barrio rhythms of Santana, War, Malo and other exemplars of Chicano cool, to the hard rock candy of Van Halen, the state has room for it all.

But it's the freewheeling, fringe-jacketed singer-songwriter who has emerged as the state's most identifiable musical standard bearer. The earliest incarnation of the sensitive troubadour can be traced to such second generation folk-rockers as Buffalo Spring-field, an uneasy alliance of soloists where the song was the thing. The group's first hit, "For What It's Worth," was a chronicle of the Sunset Strip riots, and they would incubate a number of variations on the theme, including the bucolic reveries of Crosby, Stills & Nash and Neil Young's ranch-style rock & roll.

Founded in Los Angeles in 1971, the band's ten-year run yielded five Number One singles, including such paeans to fast-lane living as "Hotel California" and "New Kid in Town." Here, California was the stage setting for cryptic cautionary tales that found innocent country boys and brazen city girls locked in a hot, star-crossed embrace ... small wonder earnest songsmiths flocked to Los Angeles in the band's wake, all in search of that elusive Tequila Sunrise. What a way to go.

California has, finally, always been that kind of place: wide open to the widest-eyed naif, consort to the dream weavers, Our Lady of Perpetual Indulgence. No wonder no place has ever sounded quite the same.

-DAVIN SEAY